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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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TREASURE-HUNTERS, BEWARE!

Souvenirs from the battle-fields of Europe are already finding their way into the Royal Ontario Museum. The other day a returned soldier brought in a huge coin which he had found in Sicily. A house-wall had blown up in front of him, scattering big and little coins in his path. The largest was $2\frac{9}{16}$ inches in diameter, made of cast brass. On one side it showed a sow suckling seven little pigs. As it certainly appeared to be an old coin, we at the Museum promised to identify it. But we were rash. Apparently Museum staffs and Museum books don't "know" everything, for we couldn't find anything like it high or low. Finally we got the American Numismatic Society on the trail. And what did they say?—that it was a fake, put over on the innocent soldier by the wall. Had he stumbled on the house of a forger? We shall never know, but it's a warning to souvenir-hunters that all that glitters isn't even ancient brass.

BIRDS TAKE THEIR HOLIDAYS IN AUGUST

This is vacation time for most birds according to ornithologists of the Royal Ontario Museum. Their family responsibilities are over for the year and the hard work of food-hunting is made easy by the annual peak of the crop of insects, seeds and berries. Even the business of singing is largely suspended. Although most birds are obliged to grow a new suit of feathers in August, this can be accomplished while loafing. By autumn they will be dressed in fresh new attire and fortified for the long trek southward by a reserve layer of fat beneath the skin.

ADOBE FROM ANCIENT EGYPT

The word *adobe*—a name for unburnt bricks dried in the sun—is generally associated with the semi-desert regions of the south-western United States.

In Egypt, another dry country many thousand miles away, exactly the same kind of brick is made today, and has been made without interruption for 5,000 years. The Egyptian collection of the Royal Ontario Museum has several examples of ancient bricks. Their label is illustrated with a brick-making scene from a tomb painting of the 15th century before Christ.

The modern adobe of the New World derives its name from these ancient bricks of the Old World. The word passed into English from the Spanish. It came to the Spaniards from the Arabic-speaking conquerors of Spain, who in their turn inherited it from the Copts of Egypt. The language of the Copts was a direct descendant of the Ancient Egyptian, whose word for brick was pronounced approximately *dobet.*

ONCE UPON A TIME the camel lived in North America! The Royal Ontario Museum has proof of it in the possession of a well-preserved fossil skeleton. The specimen represents a small variety of camel. It was found in rocks of Nebraska that date back into prehistory ten million years.

LITTLE CONE TELLS BIG STORY

Coniferous trees similar to present day forms evidently flourished, in the area we now know as Southern Alberta, long before the appearance of man. Quite recently the Royal Ontario Museum unearthed a splendidly preserved fossil cone resembling a pine cone in general appearance. It was discovered in the rocks of the Red Deer Valley, the same rocks in which dinosaur skeletons are entombed. The specimen is a rarity for probably only "one in a million" cones reached the fossil state. The tree that produced it once grew in a forest which occupied the borders of a long-vanished inland sea. It and the other trees of this ancient forest finally perished, sank to earth, and became buried. They are gone but not forgotten because their compacted remains give us to-day at least some of our western coal reserves and too, there is the fossil cone in the museum as a reminder.

DO YOU KNOW that the praying mantis is an insect, so-called from its habit of holding its front legs in an elevated position as if in the act of supplication or prayer. Of the several kinds on exhibit in the Royal Ontario Museum, from various parts of the world, some are nearly four inches in length.

RELAX AND LEARN

The other day your reporter dropped into the Royal Ontario Museum. It was a hot humid day and the pavements had seemed particularly hard. Inside the building, it was cool and there was no glare from sunlight. The broad passages between the orderly and attractive exhibits looked most inviting. Down at the end of one of the galleries, there was a machine that automatically projects lantern slides on to a screen. Best of all—there was a bench in front of it! Your reporter gratefully relaxed for a few minutes and watched as the changing pictures told a story about meteorites. He learned that a meteorite is a portion of another heavenly body which exploded long long ago. Since then, the pieces have been travelling through space until one or more of them collided with our earth. These meteorites vary in size from dust to 36 tons—the largest so far located. After the completion of the series of pictures and feeling rested and relaxed, your reporter spent several minutes examining the actual meteorites on display in the gallery.

The moral to this story is—when opportunity affords, try a visit to the museum. There you will find relaxation and things of interest, objects from the past, or from other countries, even from other worlds!

MUSEUM HOURS

When in Toronto you will find the Museum open free from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays. War conditions make it necessary to close the building on Mondays. A 15c. admission charge is made on Wednesday and Friday.